

To: Joint Steering Committee for Development of RDA
From: Dave Reser, LC Representative
Subject: Subject Relationship Element in RDA Chapter 23

Thanks to ALA for follow-up on 6JSC/ALA/Discussion/2 to proposal adding a relationship element for “has subject.” We are interested in discussing the relationship between this proposal and the high-level subject relationship in RDA paper from the JSC Technical Working Group.

Recommendations

1. The subject relationship entity: agree
2. Name of the relationship entity: agree
3. Definition: we believe the “i.e.” clause in the definition should be changed to an “e.g.” or should be removed. As an “i.e.” statement it scopes subject in a manner that some subject systems may see as limiting. For example, some subject systems may not recognize “depiction” and “setting” as “what the work is about.” To be broadly applicable, the definition in RDA must be quite broad. This same comment applies to ALA’s proposed wording for 23.4.1.1.
4. Core requirement: note that 0.6.7 could be deleted per 6JSC/BL/15. We agree that subject could remain a core element in RDA, but given the diverse authoritative subject systems in the world that may have their own requirements for number of subjects used, depth of analysis, changes in subject relationships over time (for serials, integrating resources, and multivolume monographs), etc., we do not think that any attempts should be made in RDA beyond labeling the relationship as core.
5. Techniques for recording the subject relationship: we believe that the subject relationships that are represented as “descriptions” (e.g., a summarization) or keywords should be allowed as a technique in addition to identifiers and authorized access points.
6. Additional elements in Chapter 23: agree with the proviso that this is satisfactory with the JSC Technical Working Group that discussed these elements in 6JSC TechnicalWG/1.
7. Relationship designators: we don’t agree with adding relationship designators here at this time. Given the diverse subject systems in use, some may not consider these relationships as subsets of “subject” but treat them in other ways, or believe they can only be applied to creative works rather than documentary works or other non-fiction. We believe these concepts should be deferred to the authoritative subject systems and not be included in RDA.
8. Genre/form: agree.

Additional Issue

We need resolution on whether the “Descriptive Work Relationships” in Appendix J (and the expression, manifestation, and item relationships) are being brought into the subject realm (see also 6JSC/TechnicalWG/3). If these relationship designators are moving from Appendix J to another Appendix, consideration must be given to the examples in chapters 24-28 that use these designators.

Proposal Comments

Change 1, 0.6.7: As noted above, 0.6.7 may be removed from RDA in 6JSC/BL/15. If it remains, we believe the parenthetical clause should be removed, as scoping decisions of this type should be covered by individual authoritative subject systems and not RDA. We suggest this alternative:

When recording relationships between a work and an entity that is the subject of that work, include as a minimum at least one subject relationship element if that relationship is applicable under the authoritative subject system used and is that is applicable and readily ascertainable (~~if the work has multiple subjects, only a subject that applies to the work as a whole or to a predominant part of the work is required~~).

Change 2, RDA 0.7: Agree

Change 3, Section 7 title: Agree

Change 4, Replace chapter 23: Generally agree, with these additional comments:

23.0, paragraph d): we believe that “descriptions” should also be an allowed technique for expressing subject relationships, and suggest the following change:

d) the use of identifiers and authorized access points, and/or descriptions to record subject relationships (see 23.4).

23.1.3, second paragraph: since access points in RDA do not cover items and manifestations, those words should be stricken from the parenthetical phrase.

23.1.3, third paragraph: the definition of authorized access point should state the definitions from Chapter 18 (for person, family, or corporate body entities) and from Chapter 24 (work and expression entities), but should not suggest that manifestations and items have “preferred names” in RDA or can have authorized access points. We suggest the following:

The term **authorized access point** ▼ refers to the standardized access point representing an entity. The authorized access point representing a person, family, or corporate body is constructed using the preferred name of the person, family, or corporate body.

The authorized access point representing a work or expression is constructed by combining (in this order):

- a) the authorized access point representing a person, family, or corporate body responsible for the work, if appropriate
- b) the preferred title for the work
- c) other elements as instructed at [6.27 RDA](#)–[6.31 RDA](#).

The authorized access point for a subject relationship may be a controlled subject term or combination of terms for the entity, or a classification number representing the entity, as specified in an authoritative subject system.

23.1.4, Definition of Authoritative Subject System: we would like to see a slightly expanded definition, in particular to indicate that rules for application and guideline on “core-ness” are often also included:

The term **authoritative subject system** ▼ refers to a standard for subject access points and/or classification numbers used by the agency creating the data. It may be used in determining the names or terms, other identifying attributes, and relationships of an entity used as the subject of a work. It may also include rules for application of terms, systematic combination of terminology (e.g., pre- or post-coordination), and guidelines on cardinality and depth of assignment.

23.1.5, Relationship designator: as noted above, we don’t believe the relationship designators proposed should be used, although we are unsure if relationships identified currently in Appendix J discussed in 6JSC/TechnicalWG/3 are applicable here.

23.3, Core elements: we would like to see the core element information reduced to a minimum because the requirements are likely to be coming from the authoritative subject system used or agency decisions and not RDA:

When recording relationships between a work and an entity that is the subject of that work, include as a minimum at least one subject relationship element if that relationship is applicable to the authoritative subject system used and is that is applicable and readily ascertainable (if the work has multiple subjects, only a subject that applies to the work as a whole or to a predominant part of the work is required).

23.4, Core Element scope: we think the “core if ...” scope statement should be deleted. The number of subject relationships and depth of subject analysis should be part of the authoritative subject system or agency decisions.

23.4.1.3, techniques for recording the subject: since we believe that descriptions of the subject should also be allowed in addition to identifiers and authorized access points, we suggest a slight rewording:

Record the subject of the work by using one or ~~both~~ more of these techniques:

a) identifier (see [23.4.1.3.1](#))

and/or

b) authorized access point (see [23.4.1.3.2](#))

and/or

c) description of the related subject (see [23.4.1.3.3](#)).

23.4.1.3.1, final example for identifier technique: change last part of the explanation to follow other examples: "... an entity that is a ~~the~~ subject of the work"

23.4.1.3.2, final example for authorized access point technique: change last part of the explanation to follow other examples: "... an entity that is a ~~the~~ subject of the work"

23.4.1.3.3 new section: to allow for the description of the related subject (borrowing from the style in RDA 24.4.3):

23.4.1.3.3 Description of the Related Subject

Provide a description of the related subject by using an unstructured description (i.e., a full or partial description of the related subject written as a sentence, paragraph, or keywords).

23.5, Relationship designator and Appendix L: As noted above, we are not convinced that RDA should include the types of designators given. We are interested to know whether description relationships discussed in 6JSC/TechnicalWG/3 would be appropriate here.